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Moscow Slams U.S. After Russian Journalists Denied Visas for UN Visit

By AFP

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Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov **Russian Foreign Ministry Press Service/TASS**

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Sunday said Moscow "will not forgive" Washington for denying U.S. visas to Russian journalists meant to accompany him on a visit to UN headquarters.

"We won't forget, we will not forgive this," said Lavrov, who will chair several UN Security Council meetings in New York.

Russia took up the presidency of the UN Security Council in April despite the Ukraine offensive, which Kyiv said was "a slap in the face."

Lavrov denounced a "stupid" failure of the United States to give visas to Russian journalists.

"A country that calls itself the strongest, smartest, freest and fairest, chickened out," Lavrov said.

He added this "showed the worth of their solemn assurances on freedom of speech."

Since the beginning of the offensive, Moscow has strongly tightened conditions to obtain the accreditations needed to get journalist visas in Russia.

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Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov warned of more retaliatory steps.

"We will find formats to respond to this so that the Americans remember for a long time that such things must not be done," Ryabkov was cited as saying by state-run news agencies.

RIA Novosti also cited a diplomatic source saying that, following the incident, "American journalists will experience all the discomfort and inconvenience."

Last month U.S. journalist Evan Gershkovich was arrested in Russia on claims of espionage.

The U.S. journalist, his publication and officials strongly denied the allegations.

Gershkovich, who has also worked for AFP, is the first foreign journalist arrested on spying allegations since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The diplomatic source cited by RIA Novosti said the incident over visas proved Washington's "imaginary concern" for Gershkovich.

"Otherwise, they would not treat Russian journalists like this," the source said.

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